

More families to get child care [CA-ON] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

More Toronto families will be eligible for subsidized child care under a new Ontario system, but child-care advocates warn the plan won't make much difference without new funding.

Advocates are bracing for today's announcement by Children and Youth Services Minister Mary Anne Chambers that the province is no longer going to subject families to a means test & which included a family's income, assets and expenses such as rent, heat and transportation & to determine eligibility for a child-care subsidy.

Instead, eligibility will be based solely on income. As a result, hundreds more families are expected to benefit. The program kicked in Jan. 1.

Child-care groups acknowledge it is a fairer and less punitive system that will benefit more low-income and middle-income families. But without new money to fund the extra subsidies, not much will change. The new system will only cause longer lineups and put municipalities in the hole, they say.

"On the face of it, it's good. It makes it more accessible and affordable for families. But without the funding ... it's really not going to make a huge difference," said Elizabeth Ablett, executive director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

...

Toronto officials are also bracing for the possibility the province won't include new funding in today's announcement or in its 2007-08 budget. The city warns it is going to be short \$15 million under the new system & money it will no longer be collecting in parents' fees for child care because more families will qualify for subsidies.

City councillor Joe Mihevc said the only feasible option would be to cut hundreds of subsidized spaces, creating longer waits for families.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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